

10 injured in AL-BNP clash in Cumilla

20 hurt in fight between BNP men, police in Chandpur

STAR REPORT

At least 10 people were injured in sporadic clashes between supporters of the Awami League and the BNP in Cumilla yesterday.

The incident happened in Kalirbazar, Durgapur Uttar Union, Muradpur and Chortha areas of Cumilla sadar after the electoral symbols were allotted to the MP candidates.

Meanwhile, at least 20 people, including four policemen, were injured in a clash between BNP men and law enforcers in Chandpur's Faridganj upazila yesterday.

In a statement, Hazi Yeasin, BNP nominated candidate from Cumilla-6, alleged that the local ruling party men swooped on members of his party in different places when they were holding processions with the "sheaf of paddy", BNP's electoral symbol.

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2,000 BNP men quit over Jamiat leader's ticket

STAR REPORT

Around 2,000 activists in Jashore's Manirampur quit the BNP yesterday protesting the party's decision not to nominate any of its leaders for a parliamentary seat in the district, local BNP sources said.

Mufti Md Wakkas, leader of Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam, a partner in the BNP-led 20-party alliance, got the nomination for Jashore-5.

Talking to The Daily Star, many of the protesters said they faced lawsuits and torture in the last 10 years and that many BNP men got killed in "crossfire".

However, the party high-up did not take those issues into consideration while picking the candidate, they said.

GM Ahad Ali, former president of Kashimnagar union BNP, said, "Despite such dedication and sacrifice, any of our party men was not nominated. We had no other option than quitting to express our grievances".

Contacted, Shabirul Haque Shabu,

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PHOTO: AMRAN HOSSAIN



Violating the electoral code of conduct, supporters of Awami League candidate for Dhaka-12 Asaduzzaman Khan Kamal campaign with coloured posters in New Eskaton area last night. The code prohibits use of coloured posters in electioneering. Right, earlier in the day, BNP candidate for Dhaka-9 Mirza Abbas and his wife Afroza Abbas distributed leaflets among voters in Shahjahanpur area.

Campaign takes off

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their candidates in the December 30 election.

AL President Sheikh Hasina will formally inaugurate her party's mega and hectic campaign from Tungipara in Gopalganj tomorrow after paying tribute to Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman at his grave.

She will leave Dhaka tomorrow morning for Tungipara by road, said Jahangir Kabir Nanok, joint general secretary of the AL, at a press briefing at the party chief's Dhanmondi office yesterday.

The prime minister will address a rally in her own constituency in the morning and another rally at Kotalipara at noon. She will also tour different parts of the country as part of the electioneering, Nanok added.

AL sources said Hasina will not enjoy government privileges during the campaign.

After spending a couple of days in the capital for the Victory Day celebration and unveiling of the party's election manifesto, Hasina may visit Sylhet to offer prayers at the shrines of Hazrat Shahjalal (RA) and Hazrat Shah Paran (RA).

The party is likely to launch the manifesto on December 18, insiders said.

"If she [Hasina] goes to Sylhet by air, she will return to Dhaka by road. On her way back, she will campaign in different important areas including Sunamganj, Habiganj and Mymensingh," an AL leader said, wishing anonymity.

The party chief will finalise her tour plan soon, he added.

Another AL leader said that after her Sylhet tour, Hasina along with her son Sajeeb Wazed Joy may visit Rangpur to carry out electioneering in the northern districts.

Her archrival, BNP Chairperson

Khaleda Zia, will not be present in campaigns for her party this time as she has been in jail since February 8 being convicted of corruption. Her bid to contest the polls from three constituencies was rejected by returning officers.

She also lost appeals with the Election Commission against rejection of her nomination papers by the ROs. The High Court held a long hearing on her writ petitions yesterday and will come up with its order today.

With the party chief behind bars, the BNP forged a new electoral alliance with Dr Kamal Hossain-led Gonoforum and some other parties in addition to the 20-party combine.

The BNP has planned to carry out electioneering under the banner of Jatiya Oikyafront, the new alliance, and also the 20-party combine, sources in the party said.

The party has primarily divided the whole country into four zones with

four Oikyafront leaders given the responsibility for one each. They will arrange rallies and coordinate campaigns in respective zones.

The Oikyafront may hold its first rally in Sylhet after offering prayers at the two shrines. The date may be finalised today, said sources in the alliance.

Dr Kamal Hossain may not be able to campaign across the country due to illness. He is likely to join in the rallies in divisional headquarters and in the capital.

Many senior leaders of the Oikyafront and BNP-led 20-party alliance may not be able to take part in countrywide tour as they will remain busy with their own electioneering.

The situation is almost the same for the ruling AL-led grand alliance. Top leaders of the alliance may not carry out electioneering from a common stage in different parts of the country as almost all of them will remain busy

with own campaign in their respective constituencies, sources said.

Leaders who are not running for the election will jointly work for the grand alliance candidates.

Unlike the AL and the BNP, the Jatiya Party does not have any plan for formally launching its election campaign.

SM Foysal Chisty, a JP presidium member who is also contesting from Dhaka-11, said party Chairman HM Ershad will join their election campaign after his return to Dhaka from Singapore.

The JP boss left for Singapore last night for medical check-up.

Foysal also said their party candidates have already started electioneering in their respective constituencies.

The Left Democratic Alliance, a combine of leftist parties, will start their electioneering by placing flowers at Central Shaheed Minar today. It will hold a brief rally there, said a press release yesterday.

Act neutrally to ensure fair polls

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"The Election Commission is accountable to the nation, constitution, political parties and public for a fair election," he said, adding, "The commission wants an atmosphere of trust, not panic."

Some 640 magistrates will be on duty from December 29 to January 1

during the polls, he further said.

Election Commissioner Mahbub Talukder said their aim was to make sure no candidate goes to the Jatiya Sangsad without confirming a win through votes.

He added that action would be taken against those who show reluctance or partiality.

Mahbub then urged the judicial magistrates to take necessary measures so that voters can reach their homes safely after voting.

Election Commissioners Rafiqul Islam, Kabita Khanam, Brigadier (retd) Shahadat Hossain and EC Secretary Helaluddin Ahmed also spoke at the briefing.

SHAH MOAZZEM SEEKS LEVEL PLAYING FIELD

Meanwhile, Shah Moazzem Hossain, BNP candidate from Munshiganj -2, sought necessary actions to ensure a level playing field in the upcoming polls.

Moazzem made the request to the Election Commission yesterday, claim-

ing his motorcade came under attack in his locality on Saturday and the attackers damaged five vehicles, fired shots and injured several supporters.

He alleged that the attackers left the scene chanting slogans for "boat" (Awami League's electoral symbol) and his supporters went into a panic after the incident.



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